NUMB. LXVI.

The GUARDIAN.

Sæpe tribus lectis videas cœnare quaternos:
E quibus unus avet quavis aspergere cunctos,
Præter eum qui præbet aquam: post hunc quoque— Hor.

Wednesday, May 27. 1713.

THE following Letter is full of Imagination, and, in a fabulous manner, sets forth a Connexion between Things, and an Alliance between Persons that are very distant and remote to common Eyes. I think I know the Hand to be that of a very ingenious Man, and shall therefore give it the Reader without further Preface.

To the GUARDIAN.

SIR,

'THere is a Sett of Mankind, who are wholly employed in the ill-natured Office of gathering up a Collection of Stories that lessen the Reputation of others, and spreading them Abroad with a certain Air of Satisfaction. Perhaps, indeed, an innocent unmeaning Curiosity, a Desire of being informed concerning those we live with, or a Willingness to profit by Reflection upon the Actions of others, may sometimes afford an Excuse, or sometimes a Defence, for Inquisitiveness; but certainly it is, beyond all Excuse, a Transgression against Humanity to carry the Matter further, to tear off the Dressings, as I may say, from the Wounds of a Friend, and expose them to the Air in cruel Fits of Diversion; and yet we have something more to bemoan, an Outrage of a higher Nature, which Mankind is guilty of when they are not content to spread the Stories of Folly, Frailty and Vice, but even enlarge them, or invent new ones, and blacken Characters that we may appear ridiculous or hateful to one another. From such Practices as these it happens, that some feel a Sorrow, and others are agitated with a Spirit of Revenge, that Scandals or Lies are told, because another has told such before, that Resentments and Quarrels arise, and Affronts and Injuries are given, received and multiplied in a Scene of Vengeance.

'All this I have often observed with abundance of Concern, and having a perfect Desire to further the Happiness of Mankind, I lately set my self to consider the Causes from whence such Evils arise, and the Remedies which may be applied. Whereupon I shut my Eyes to prevent a Distraction from outward Objects, and a while after shot away, upon an impulse of Thought, into the *World of Ideas*, where abstracted Qualities became visible in such Appearances as were agreeable to each of their Natures.

'That part of the Country, where I happened to light, was the most Noisie that I had ever known. The Winds whistled, the Leaves rustled, the Brooks rumbled, the Birds chatter'd, the Tongues of Men were heard, and the Eccho mingled something of every Sound in its Repetition, so that there was a strange Confusion and Uproar of Sounds about me. At length, as the Noise still encreased, I could discern a Man habited like a Herald (and as I afterwards understood) called *Novelty*, that came forward proclaiming a Solemn Day to be kept at the House of *Common Fame*. Immediately behind him advanced three Nymphs, who had monstrous Appearances. The first of these was *Curiosity*, habited like a Virgin, and having an hundred Ears upon her Head to serve in her Enquiries. The second of these was *Talkativeness*, a little better grown, she seemed to be like a young Wife, and had an hundred Tongues to spread her Stories. The third was *Censoriousness*, habited like a Widow, and surrounded with an hundred Squinting Eyes of a malignant Influence, which so obliquely darted on all around, that it was impossible to say which of them had brought in the Informations she boasted of. These, as I was informed, had been very instrumental in preserving and rearing *Common Fame*, when upon her Birth-day she was shuffled into a Crowd, to escape the search which *Truth* might have made after her and her Parents. *Curiosity* found her there, *Talkativeness* conveyed her away, and *Censoriousness* so nursed her up, that in a short time she grew to a prodigious Size, and obtained an Empire over the Universe; wherefore the *Power*, in Gratitude for these Services, has since advanced them to her highest Employments. The next who came forward in the Procession was a light Damsel, called *Credulity*, who carried behind them the Lamp, the Silver Vessel with a Spout, and other Instruments proper for this solemn Occasion. She had formerly seen these three together, and conjecturing, from the number of their

their Ears, Tongues and Eyes, that they might be the proper *Genii* of *Attention*, *Familiar Converſe*, and *Ocular Demonſtration*, ſhe from that time gave her ſelf up to attend them. The laſt who followed were ſome who had cloſely muffled themſelves in upper Garments, ſo that I could not diſcern who they were; but juſt as the foremoſt of them was come up, I am glad, ſays ſhe, calling me by my Name, to meet you at this time, ſtay cloſe by me, and take a ſtrict Obſervation of all that paſſes. Her Voice was ſweet and commanding, I thought I had ſomewhere heard it; and from her, as I went along, I learned the Meaning of every thing which offered.

'We now marched forward through the *Rookery* of *Rumours*, which flew thick and with a terrible din around us. At length we arrived at the Houſe of *Common Fame*, where a Hecatomb of *Reputations* was that Day to fall for her Pleaſure. The Houſe ſtood upon an Eminence, having a thouſand Paſſages to it, and a thouſand whiſpering Holes for the Conveyance of Sound. The Hall we entered was formed with the Art of a Muſick-Chamber for the Improvement of Noiſes. *Reſt* and *Silence* are baniſhed the Place. *Stories* of different Natures wander in light Flocks all about, ſometimes Truths and Lies, or ſometimes Lies themſelves claſhing againſt one another. In the middle ſtood a Table painted after the manner of the remoteſt *Aſiatick* Countries, upon which the Lamp, the Silver Veſſel, and Cups of a white Earth, were planted in order. Then dried Herbs were brought, collected for the Solemnity in Moonſhine, and Water being put to them, there was a greeniſh Liquor made, to which they added the Flower of Milk, and an Extraction from the Canes of *America*, for performing a Libation to the Infernal *Powers* of *Miſchief*. After this *Curioſity*, retiring to a withdrawing Room, brought forth the *Victims*, being to Appearance a Sett of ſmall waxen Images, which ſhe laid upon the Table one after another. Immediately then *Talkativeneſs* gave each of them the Name of ſome one, whom for the time they were to repreſent; and *Cenſoriouſneſs* ſtuck them all about with black Pins, ſtill pronouncing, at every one ſhe ſtuck, ſomething to the Prejudice of the Perſons repreſented. No ſooner were theſe Rites performed, and Incantations uttered, but the ſound of a Speaking-Trumpet was heard in the Air, by which they knew the *Deity* of the Place was propitiated and aſſiſting. Upon this the Sky grew darker, a Storm aroſe, and Murmurs, Sighs, Groans, Cries, and the Words of Grief or Reſentment were heard within it. Thus the three *Sorcereſſes* diſcovered that they, whoſe Names they had given to the Images, were already affected with what was done to them in Effigie. The Knowledge of this was received with the loudeſt Laughter, and in many Congratulatory Words they applauded one anothers Wit and Power.

'As Matters were at this high Point of Diſorder, the muffled Lady, whom I attended on, being no longer able to endure ſuch barbarous Proceedings, threw off her upper Garment of *Reſerve*, and appeared to be *Truth*. As ſoon as ſhe had confeſs'd her ſelf preſent, the Speaking-Trumpet ceas'd to Sound, the Sky cleared up, the Storm abated, the Noiſes which were heard in it ended, the Laughter of the Company was over, and a ſerene Light, till then unknown to the Place, diffuſed around it. At this the detected *Sorcereſſes* endeavoured to eſcape in a Cloud which I ſaw began to thicken round them, but it was ſoon diſperſed, their Charms being controled, and prevailed over by the ſuperior *Divinity*. For my Part I was exceedingly glad to ſee it ſo, and began to conſider what Puniſhments ſhe would inflict upon them. I fancied it would be proper to cut off *Curioſity*'s Ears, and fix them to the Eaves of Houſes, to nail the Tongues of *Talkativeneſs* to *Indian* Tables, and to put out the Eyes of *Cenſoriouſneſs* with a Flaſh of her Light. In reſpect of *Credulity* I had indeed ſome little Pity, and had I been Judge ſhe might, perhaps, have eſcaped with a hearty Reproof.

'But I ſoon found that the diſcerning *Judge* had other Deſigns, ſhe knew them for ſuch as will not be deſtroyed intirely while Mankind is in Being, and yet ought to have a Brand and Puniſhment affixed to them that they may be avoided. Wherefore ſhe took a Seat for Judgment, and had the *Criminals* brought forward by *Shame* ever bluſhing, and *Trouble* with a Whip of many Laſhes, two Phantoms who had dogged the *Proceſſion* in Diſguiſe, and waited till they had an Authority from *Truth* to lay Hands upon them. Immediately then ſhe ordered *Curioſity* and *Talkativeneſs* to be fettered together, that the one ſhould never ſuffer the other to reſt, nor the other ever let her remain undiſcovered. Light *Credulity* ſhe linkt to *Shame* at the Tormentors own Requeſt, who was pleaſed to be thus ſecure that her Priſoner could not eſcape, and this was done partly for her Puniſhment, and partly for her Amendment. *Cenſoriouſneſs* was alſo in like manner begged by *Trouble*, and had her aſſigned for an eternal Companion. After they were thus chain'd with one another, by the Judge's Order, ſhe drove them from the Preſence to wander for ever thro' the World with *Novelty* ſtalking before them.

'The Cauſe being now over, ſhe retreated from ſight within the Splendor of her own Glory, which leaving the Houſe it had brightened, the Sounds that were proper to the Place began to be as loud and confuſed as when we entered, and there being no longer a clear diſtinguiſhed Appearance of any Objects repreſented to me, I returned from the Excurſion I had made in *Fancy*.

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